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BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Speaking at the Aspen Security Forum, President George W. Bush's first diplomat was asked a question by VOA on how Georgia could cope with Russia's growing aggression 12 years after Russia's invasion. Former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice says Georgia needs to build its own democracy and economy to cope with difficult international circumstances. The international community can only help in this process.

"I will say about Georgia what I was telling Georgians then, as well as Ukrainians and others, that international circumstances may not be very favorable, but you have to build your own country. You have to build your own democracy. You have to build your own economy," she said, adding that each one must write down its rules and laws for economic development, an international system can help, but it all starts at home, with good governance. Rice commented that Georgian democracy had its ups and downs, but it survived, which is a good sign.

Speaking of Russia, she pointed to 2parallel approaches, saying that 'first of all, it must be determined where Putin should be contained.' "He should be restrained. Because of this, I think it is a good idea to withdraw troops [from Germany] and deploy them further east. The truth is, even to restrain the Soviet Union, we have never depended solely on what

Condoleezza Rice: Georgia must build its own democracy



► Former US Secretary of State: "Georgia must build its own democracy, the international system can help you, but it all starts at home, with good governance," Former US Secretary of State announced.

the president says. She recalled that the Soviet Union was contained by American troops that were in danger in Germany, noting that more can be done in this direction in the NATO framework. "I think we can do more to help countries that are facing [Russia's] threat," Rice said.

The second issue addressed by the former Secretary of State was the growing dissatisfaction of the Russian people, as evidenced by the ongoing mass protests in Khabarovsk. Rice says many people in

Russia share Western values. "We need a very nuanced [approach] towards the Russian people and we need to encourage those who want to see a different Russia."

The Secretary of State also added that it may be necessary to wait for Putin to step down: "I would not take it for granted that he could stay [as president] for as long as he wished. Such regimes are more fragile."

Condoleezza Rice served as the US

Secretary of State during Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia. She visited Tbilisi on August 15th, 2008, on the instructions of President Bush to express support for Georgia.

US Congressman John Katko wrote on the social network on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of the Georgian-Russian war, saying "the occupation of the territory of Georgia is an absolute reminder of the need for partnership with our democratic allies."

According to the Republican congressman, many of the US allies in the fight against hostile countries depend on US assistance.

John Katko also notes that Russia has infiltrated not only the battlefield but also cyberspace and attacked critical infrastructure, which has significantly hampered Georgia's response.

"As we reaffirm our commitment to Georgia by strengthening the preparedness of our allies, we will also focus on preventing similar attacks," Katko wrote.

"Russia invaded Georgia 12 years ago and the Kremlin is still carrying out similar acts of aggression in Europe," Republican Congressman Stephen Womack also wrote on Twitter.

According to the congressman, the United States and Georgia have established a strong partnership and the United States stands by them on the path to democracy.

"We must respond to Russian aggression in every possible way," the congressman wrote.



► Congressman John Katko: "Occupation of Georgian territory is an absolute reminder of the need for partnership with our democratic allies."

MIA states it's ready to cooperate with FBI on the case of Tamar Bachaliashvili

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Family members of Tamar Bachaliashvili, a 23-year old programmer, who was found dead in her car after a 4-day search, gathered in front of the US embassy on 4th of August, demanding FBI's involvement in the investigation.

Later, the representatives of the embassy met with the family of Bachaliashvili and explained to them that FBI's engagement in the case would only be possible on the ground of the state's official request and that the FBI does not have the power to involve in the investigation at the request of a private individual.

Based on the statements and requests of the deceased woman's family, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia expressed readiness to cooperate with the FBI and summoned the family to the authority to discuss the details. On August 5th, Bachaliashvili's parents and family lawyer arrived at the MIA. As Bachaliashvili's mother explained, the reason why they arrived at the MIA is to clarify how tight the FBI's involvement will be.

Bachaliashvili's mother says that the family does not want the FBI to be involved in the case only at the level of consultations, but to be engaged thoroughly. They seek answers to the questions such as - why did Tamar disappear, why could not she be found for 5 days and why was 'everything' in the computer deleted. According to Bachaliashvili's mother, they are waiting for the FBI to unlock the car. Mikheil Ramishvili, family lawyer who is working on the case, stated that the family will protest the examination of the car without the FBI.

Ramishvili was told at MIA that the FBI has already sent a request for cooperation, however, despite the request of Bachaliashvili's family on bureau's full involvement, it is still unknown how tightly they will be engaged.



Tamar Bachaliashvili's family in front of the US embassy.

Bachaliashvili's mother, Teona Tamazashvili stated that there are a lot of shortcomings in the case and believes that the existence of so many unanswered questions is due to the officials who are linked to her daughter's death.

Bachaliashvili disappeared on July 18th and her body was found on July 22th in her own car, which was parked near the forest in Tetrtskharo Municipality.

The investigation was commenced under unlawful deprivation of liberty and the article on leading to suicide was added later. The family rules out the suicide version and believes that the young woman was murdered because of the information that she possessed.

As the family lawyer stated, many incontrovertible pieces of evidence prove that Bachaliashvili 'had not been led to suicide, but was definitely murdered.'



MIA has already sent a request to the FBI for cooperation.

Seven teams in Eastern Neighbourhood nominated for Digitalisation for Civil Society Award 2020

On 1 August, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) announced the seven teams in the Eastern Neighbourhood region nominated for the Digitalisation for Civil Society Award 2020.

The nominees are part of the 16 teams who participated in the EaP Civil Society Hackathon in June-July 2020. Over the last three weeks the teams developed their solutions in collaboration with designers, IT experts and



mentors. The ideas include mobile application prototypes, online games and platforms for solving a wide range of problems in the region.

The seven nominees will have two weeks to develop their technical proposals and budgets and submit their applications for the award. The best solution(s) will be selected for EU funding, allowing their full development and launch.

THURSDAY AUGUST 6

Day Clear
High: **31°C**

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: **19°C**

FRIDAY AUGUST 7

Day Clear
High: **32°C**

Night Clear
Low: **19°C**

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Georgia's economy will shrink by 5% instead of 4%



► NBG reduces the monetary policy rate to 8%.

► "In the first half of the year, the Georgian economy shrank by 5.8% annually," NBG President said.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The updated forecast of the National Bank of Georgia (NBG), in 2020 the Georgian economy will shrink by another 1%. As Koba Gvenetadze, chairman of the NBG announced after the August meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee, the economic decline in Georgia in 2020 will be -5%. The previous forecast was -4%. "The further decline in global economic activity and foreign demand than at the beginning of the pandemic has led to this change," he explained.

According to Gvenetadze, in the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic, the International Monetary Fund forecast global economic growth at -3%, but recently published updated and more pessimistic forecast reads that the global economy will shrink to -4.9% this year.

According to the NBG President, this is one of the factors that led to the revision of Georgia's forecast.

Based on the baseline scenario of the Central Bank, Gvenetadze also informed that in 2020, revenues from tourism will decrease by 80% compared to

last year. According to him, the main feature of the current crisis is uncertainty, which mostly affects the tourism sector.

"We maintain a conservative approach in our forecasts, and therefore our forecast is based on the assumption that tourism revenues will be minimal for the rest of the year," he added.

According to the NBG's decision, the interest on more than tens of thousands of loans in Georgia will be reduced. The

reduction of the refinancing rate by 0.25 units was discussed by the Monetary Policy Committee. As a result, the monetary policy rate was set at 8%.

The decision to reduce the refinancing rate was made by the NBG was due to the low inflation rate. In July, prices fell by 0.5%.

As of July 1, 2020, 118,500 loans tied to the floating interest rate were issued. The vast majority of them are tied to the refinancing rate. At present,

€6185.408 million of loans tied to the floating interest rate have been issued.

According to the public and banks, the number of loans issued from June 1st to July 1st increased by 2,000. Information on loans tied to the refinancing rate is contained in the loan agreement. Citizens can also get detailed information from the bank. The next meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee will be held on August 5th, 2020.

PM chairs another Coordination Council meeting



► Interagency Coordination Council.



► Schools will start on September 15th in classrooms and auditoriums.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

At the recent coordination council meeting, chaired by the PM, Giorgi Gakharia, based on the analysis of the current epidemiological situation, council members agreed to start schools on September 15th. Students will attend lessons in person. The Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport stated that the ministry is ready

for any possible scenarios and that the educational system will adapt to the relevant epidemiological situation. Also, complying with the recommendations of the Ministry of Healthcare, libraries will be able to open from today onwards. The information is given in a statement, published by the Government of Georgia.

According to the Minister of Economy and Sustainable

Development, attraction to the platform which is applicable to business visitors is increasing (almost 2,700 applications have been filed so far from various countries).

Also, the minister announced a platform, which will enable foreign investors to conduct long-term remote works from Georgia. "Various international financial organizations with a part of their staff working

remotely have expressed their keen interests in this regard," reads the government's statement.

The statement also notes that in order to support economic activities, business visits are free of restrictions from all countries, under certain conditions. Business visitors to Georgia are responsible to test themselves for COVID-19 in every 72 hours, at their own expenses or to go through a 14-day mandatory quarantine.

At the council meeting, a report was presented, which regarded the passengers arriving from the countries that

have bilaterally opened borders with Georgia. According to the statement, randomly selected tourists and visitors as well as the ones upon their own request were tested with PCR tests and the results of every test came out negative.

There were 15 new coronavirus cases within 24 hours on August 5th, and 12 patients recovered. According to the recent data, out of the overall 1197 confirmed cases of the virus, 974 individuals have recovered and 17 COVID patients have died. 41 Georgian citizens have been transported from abroad for treatment.

The Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Georgia H.E. Petr Mikyska held a cocktail to bid farewell to Mr. Jiri Preclik and Mr. Milan Glaser and to welcome their successors Ms. Jana Gasparikova and Mr. Jan Gasparik on August 4.



Mr. Jiri Preclik, Deputy Head of Mission, Mrs. Lenka Gabrielova, Consular Officer, H.E. Petr Mikyska and Mr. Milan Glaser, Head of Administration

H.E. Petr Mikyska, Mrs. Jana Gasparikova, Deputy Head of Mission, Mr. Jan Gasparik, Head of Administration and Mr. Zdenek Balzer, Consular Officer

